



Preconditions of Performance Effectiveness

Performance effectiveness is the result of a fit and consistent combination of three components namely the manager's competencies, his job demands and the organisational environment, writes M R Chandramowly.

A mother wished to encourage her daughter's interest in the piano and so took her to a local concert featuring an excellent pianist. On entering the foyer, the mother met an old friend and the two stopped to talk. The little girl was keen to take a peek at the hall and so wandered off, unnoticed by her mother. The girl's mother became concerned when she could see no sign of her daughter. With the concert due to start, the little girl had still not been found.

In preparation for the pianist's entrance, the curtains drew aside, to reveal the little girl sitting at the great piano, focused in concentration, quietly picking out the notes of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. The audience's amusement turned to curiosity when the pianist entered the stage, walked up to the little girl, and said, 'keep playing.' The pianist sat down beside her, listened for a few seconds, and whispered some more words of encouragement. He then began quietly to play a bass accompaniment, and then a few bars later, reached around the little girl to add more accompaniment. At the end of the impromptu performance, the audience applauded loudly as the pianist took the little girl back to her seat, to be reunited with her mother. Everyone appreciated performance. How did it become effective?

The HR division of an organisation had a tough target of recruiting 50 engineers in 60 days time. The HR team did an excellent job of hiring. A grand induction program was organised on the scheduled day and they received appreciation and incentives for their effort and success.

Further on, over a period of five months, 18 engineers left to join better jobs, five engineers did not fit the job profile, two were asked to leave because of cultural misfit and one was terminated for inflating travel bills. How do we rate performance here? Can one blame it on the HR department? Are they alone responsible for this?

A sales manager of a reputed service organisation generated a revenue of Rs 1.18 crore in the first quarter of 2005, overshooting his target of Rs 90 lakh. In the same quarter, he suffered a 40 per cent turnover of staff. How do we measure the performance effectiveness of the sales manager?

Assessing performance

Performance assessment of some jobs is easy. A regional sales manager sends out his monthly sales statement by the end of the first week. A production manager of a unit makes a report of monthly production, waste reduction, down time, man-hours utilised and in some cases computes training days or safety incidents.

It may not be difficult for a project manager to send out weekly progress reports on the software

development project. A software developer can write a monthly report detailing the codes written, bugs fixed, tests conducted, outcome of integration with team leads and about following the process standards.

Sales turnover figures, new customer additions or expansion of the existing customer base are some of the criteria based on which the performance of the staff in a sales division is assessed.

Quality, cost and delivery are some parameters for performance assessment of position holders of production or service divisions. The same is applicable to certain positions in the IT sector, telecom sector or even software products/services.

Performance of a production executive is influenced by the quality of interactions he has with other divisions in an organisation.

When conflicts emerge between two divisions, the results would definitely be negative. But the process documents may not reflect the reality. What constitutes effective performance is the key question.

Richard E Boyatzis who received competency knowledge, direction and insight from David C McClelland, the father of the competency movement says, "Some jobs do not provide easy access to, or interpretation of measures of performance, such as a the job of a research and development manager, an employee relations specialist, a product design engineer, or a scientist."

Effective job performance is not just about attaining specific results. It takes in the specific actions for consistent maintenance of policy, procedures and conditions of the organisational environment.

Achieving the PURPOSE (of the organisation, division or job), PEOPLE effectiveness (levels above, below and across - other department, customers - internal and external), PROCESS adherence (quality, controls, measures and validations), PERSONAL learning (technical competence and emotional intelligence) and PERFECTION in all these areas are the '5 P' dimensions of effectiveness. The key questions for leaders and organisations is, 'how can one identify effective job performance in a person before selecting him'. One can know more about effective job performance by understanding its three main domains.

Boatzis presents a model of effective job performance, which is graphically represented in three intersected circles. The first circle represents individual competencies, the second is for the job demand and the third is for the organisational environment

Effective job performance

Individual competencies are the components which reveal what a person is capable of doing. It brings out 'why' he may act in certain ways.

Job demands primarily reveal 'what' a person is expected to do and the organisational environment reveals some aspects of what a person in a management job is expected to do but primarily shows us 'how' a person is expected to respond to his/her job demands. "This model suggests that effective performance will occur when all the three components of the model fit well.

If any one or two of these components are inconsistent and do not correspond with each other, then it is

expected that ineffective performance would be the end result.”

Boatzis’s acknowledges that his model is an adaptation of the Classical Psychological Model of Behaviour (McClelland, 1971), that says that - behaviour is a function of the person and the environment.

Job demands

A manager’s job is to achieve the organisation’s goals through planning, coordination, supervision and decision-making, utilising the investment made and human resources.

Managers get things done through others. Their job demands can be described in terms of tasks, roles and finally the results in terms of the output of units (products or services).

General functions such as staff selection, delegation of responsibility, establishing goals, making decisions, reviewing responsibility, rewarding or reprimanding are common for all managers. But, the tasks differ based on function specificity.

To identify performance effectiveness of a manager, one needs to consider various parameters, not his actions alone.

Environment

Organisations exist in the larger context of the economic, political, social, and religious conditions, evolving their own culture. This would have an affect on the manager’s behaviour.

Cultural values regarding an organisation, its reputation and products will also affect a manager’s behaviour. A manager would try to figure out the kind of behaviour, that is apt in the job context. He would also modulate his behaviour, one suitable for his job success as well as his survival and growth.

If a manager uses his competencies against the invisible forces of the organisational climate, he would be viewed as demonstrating inappropriate behaviour. An organisation is like a ‘body’ of business with its ‘senses’ of action and knowledge. Key positions of the organisation are in the mind, and a manager is the ‘intellect’. A body functions to its best when there is congruence of all three parts of the personality - the body, mind and intellect. They play vital roles in physical, emotional and intellectual actions to produce desired results, when in perfect alignment.

So is a manager who fits the job and is supported by an organisational environment.

How can a brick see the building, size and shapes?

But if it slips out, the wall cracks and breaks

You are a brick in the creation, beware of the hit

You are sure to get knocks if, fail to fit

(Dr D V G’s Kagga - 532)

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